

We claim:

1. A combined writing instrument and laser pointer unit for creating a visual display on a target, comprising:
 - (a) a portable, hand-held housing aimable by a user at a target;
 - (b) a laser emitter supported by the housing, for emitting a laser light beam along a path outwardly of the housing towards the target and producing a beam spot on the target; and
 - (c) a writing instrument supported by the housing.
2. An apparatus as defined in claim 1, further comprising an optical element in the housing which is mechanically moved in and out of the path of the emitted laser beam.
3. An apparatus as defined in claim 2, wherein the optical element is a lens which focuses the laser beam at either a short range from the housing or at a substantially greater range.
4. An apparatus as defined in claim 1, further comprising a detector within the housing operative for detecting at least a portion of light of variable intensity reflected off the coded indicia and for generating an electrical signal indicative of the detected light intensity.
5. An apparatus as defined in claim 4, further comprising a processor for decoding the electrical signal into data represented by the coded indicia and a memory for storing the data within the housing.